

Writing program: Reflections 2010 and looking forward 2011

2010 – Reflections

In writing this document I am extremely conscious of the fact that I have not taught the formal writing process in 2010. My teaching has been to acknowledge there are huge gaps in student knowledge and to attempt to address this by engaging the students in writing to an audience other than the teacher. I used the process of writing to penpals – a class in Denver, Colorado. To a degree this worked well, though some students needed huge levels of prompting to move their writing from basic to mildly interesting. Some students (the able writers) wrote extensively, long interesting letters full of facts, anecdotes, jokes, and information about their lives and the happenings in New Zealand as discussed in the news. Using penpals in another country on the other side of the world exposes huge misunderstandings in student knowledge of the size of the world, ie. they still hold ego-centric concepts of time and space, (for example, “*Did you feel the earthquake?*” about the Christchurch earthquake to a student in Denver, Colorado).

I am concerned that these students leave my class at the end of 2010 without being exposed to a lot of formal writing lessons designed to give them the skills necessary to write in a style that is acceptable to their cohort level.

2011 – Looking Forward

Apropos to all of the above my plan for 2011 is to teach writing to my students in a manner that has them *writing for the joy of writing*. I think this is important because the concept removes the need for audience. The student becomes their own audience – any other audience is permitted to read the work because the student is proud of their product.

I've Got Something to Say by Gail IOane, 2010, the following list is her definition of an independent learner-writer:

- Love words, stories, talking and patterns of sound
- Know they have something to say
- Experience writing as an important part of their lives
- Be enthusiastic and gain deep satisfaction from their writing (*hard to judge or measure this*)
- Be able to talk about their writing knowledgably
- Seek responses to their writings from their peers and from the teacher (*collaboration*)
- Understand that the purpose of their writing demands a particular form, or combination of forms or language features.
- Experiment with ideas that have been explored in mini lessons, crafting and recrafting for better effect.
- Be constantly aware of possibilities for writing in their world and beyond.
- Use author mentors from a range of literature, for inspiration, guidance and modelling
- Write for the love of it.

This list sets my goals, standards and aspirations for the teaching of writing in 2011. I would like most of my students to achieve at most of these standards.

IOane states that to teach writing one must be a writer and model the art and enjoyment of writing to one's students. She also recommends the use of a journal in daily life to write down and collect bits of information that one could find useful to spark a writing session. This could include cuttings and copies of other's writing, pasted in collections of artifacts, photos, as well as one's own writings, jottings and musings.

Writing in Room 11, 2011

We will explore all aspects of writing and will use journals, pen-pals, poetry and creative writing as the means to achieve our goals. The students will all purchase a hard-back 2B4 notebook to use as a journal and I will model this with my own journal.

Pen-pals will be arranged through a new student from South Africa, Emily Jacobs. If this is not possible I will arrange them through e-pals or through Paul Hemphill a teacher in Brisbane.

To improve my praxis in writing I have developed a folder that contains a large range of the resources necessary.

ARB Resources Map – describing where a typical Year 3 and 4 student should be achieving.

The LNS Writing Curriculum Statement, Writing Progressions and Genre Rubrics.

A statement of Language Growth – Thought, Structure, Audience.

The Writing Process – Forming Intentions, Composing, Revising, Publishing (Presenting)

Teacher Pedagogy Rubric

Writing Matrix – Students expected to be proficient at Level 2 by the end of Year 4

NZCER Progress Indicators

Level Descriptors for Writing

Plus a range of other material.

To demonstrate what good writing looks like I am collecting a range of exemplars that will be displayed on the wall (as well as laminated for hands on use) and referred to during lessons as aspirational models.